Natural interspecies transfer of mitochondrial DNA in amphibians

(introgression/restriction enzymes/Rana/phylogeny/evolution)

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ABSTRACT mtDNAs of two Central European water frog species, Rana ridibunda and Rana lessonae, were examined by electrophoresis of restriction enzyme fragments. Two types of mtDNA occur in R. ridibunda. One shares with mtDNA of R. lessonae 25.8% of 132 fragments generated by 19 enzymes, corresponding to a nucleotide sequence divergence of 8.1%; the other has diverged from R. lessonae mtDNA by only 0.3%. This latter type is a variant R. lessonae mtDNA that has been transferred into R. ridibunda; the introgression may have occurred via the hybridogenetic hybrid lineages collectively known as Rana esculenta. Of 37 R. ridibunda from Poland, 59% had the typical R. ridibunda mtDNA; 41% had the modified R. lessonae mtDNA as did a single individual from Switzerland (introduced). A single R. ridibunda from Turkey, outside the present range of R. lessonae, had the typical R. ridibunda mtDNA phenotype. Discordancies between inheritance of mitochondrial and nuclear genomes point up the danger of relying on a single molecular feature in reconstructing phylogeny. In addition, studies of mtDNA provide otherwise inaccessible information on complex evolutionary histories of closely related species. A knowledge of these complexities is important to an understanding of phylogenetic relationships and of the genetic processes that underlie the evolution of clonal taxa.

Determination or estimation of sequence differences of mtDNA is a powerful tool for reconstructing the genealogy or phylogeny of closely related groups of individuals, populations, or species. Since mtDNA is maternally inherited (1–4), it is an excellent marker for identifying the maternal parent in hybridizations giving rise to parthenogenetic (5, 6) or gynogenetic (unpublished data) species. In addition, mtDNA analysis has been useful in determining relationships both within (7–12) and among (13, 14) species. Both a strength and a weakness of mtDNA analyses, however, is that genealogies revealed by them reflect only the maternal histories. Furthermore, phylogenies of species reconstructed from mtDNA may sometimes be in error because of introgression of these independently segregating organelles from one species to another.

The western Palearctic water frogs are of particular interest since at least three groups of hybrid lineages occur among them (15–18). In all three cases, Rana ridibunda Pallas 1771 is one of the parental species. Rana lessonae Camerano 1882, Rana perezi Seoane 1885, and an unnamed taxon resembling R. lessonae from peninsular Italy are the other parental species. In these hybrid lineages, the gametes (whether ova or sperm) normally contain only an intact ridibunda genome; the non-ridibunda genome is excluded from the gametes (19–21). Hybrids are reformed each generation because the hybrids normally mate with the non-ridibunda parental species. Such hybrids, in which one genome is transmitted clonally from generation to generation, while the

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other genome is newly introduced in each generation, are termed hybridogenetic (22).

We compared the restriction fragment patterns of mtDNA from R. ridibunda and R. lessonae, the parental species of a number of hybridogenetic lineages that occur throughout much of Central Europe and are collectively known as Rana esculenta.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Specimens. Most samples of frogs were collected from six localities in western Poland, within a 40-km radius of Poznan. In addition, single individuals of *R. ridibunda* were obtained from Pfynwald, Switzerland, and from Gelibolu, Turkey (Table 1).

Preparation of mtDNA. mtDNA was usually isolated from mature ova of females (23), although occasionally liver, heart, and kidney were used instead. Mitochondria were isolated by homogenization of tissue in STE buffer (0.25 M sucrose/0.03 M Tris·HCl/0.01 M EDTA, pH 7.6) and differential centrifugation. Crude mtDNAs were prepared following the procedures outlined by Davis et al. (24). In some cases the mitochondrial fraction was banded on a sucrose step gradient (0.9 M and 1.8 M sucrose) prior to lysis.

Crude mtDNA preparations were purified by sequential extractions with phenol and chloroform. mtDNA was precipitated with 2 vol of ethanol, resuspended in TE buffer (10 mM Tris HCl/1.0 mM EDTA, pH 8.0)/0.25 M sodium acetate, treated with 50 μ g of RNase A per ml and 200 units of T1 RNase per ml for 1 hr at 37°C, and then treated with 100 μ g of proteinase K per ml for 1 hr at 37°C. This was followed again by organic extractions and ethanol precipitation. Purified mtDNAs were stored at -70°C in a 1:10 dilution of TE buffer. The purity and quantity of each preparation were determined by minigel electrophoresis of a 1–5% aliquot.

Table 1. Collection localities and mtDNA phenotypes

			mtDNA phenotype			
Species	n	Locality	A	·B	C	
R. ridibunda	4	PL: Poznan	Q	4	0	
	16	PL: Fabianowo*	9	7	0	
	5	PL: Naramowice*	2	3	0	
	10	PL: Dymaczewo	9	1	0	
	2	PL: Lodz near Mosina	2	0	0	
	1	CH: Pfynwald	0	1	0	
	1	TR: Gelibolu	1	0	0	
Total	39		23	16	Ó	
R. lessonae	3	PL: Lodz near Mosina	0	0	3	
	27	PL: Naramowice*	0	0	27	
	2	PL: Edwardowo*	0	0	2	
Total	32		0	0	32	

PL, Poland; CH, Switzerland; TR, Turkey. *Suburb of Poznan.

Restriction Endonuclease Analysis of mtDNA. Five to 10 ng of each DNA sample were digested to completion with each restriction enzyme by using conditions recommended by the supplier (New England Biolabs or Bethesda Research Laboratories). Resulting DNA fragments were end-labeled with the appropriate α -32P-labeled triphosphate deoxynucleoside and separated according to size by electrophoresis through 1% agarose or 3.5% polyacrylamide gels; separated fragments were detected by autoradiography (11). For each gel, fragment sizes were estimated from mobilities of size standards; for agarose gels, these were λ and PM2 DNAs, each cut with *Hin*dIII; for polyacrylamide gels, they were ϕ X174 cut with *Hin*cII and pBR322 cut with *Alu* I.

Calculation of Sequence Divergence. The amount of sequence divergence was estimated by comparing fragment patterns generated with each enzyme. Fragments were considered to be homologous and shared if they migrated the same distance. For an enzyme that cuts each of two mtDNAs at a single site, the single fragment generated in each case was assumed to be homologous. The proportion of shared fragments was estimated by using Nei and Li's (25) equation 21. The percent sequence divergence, δ , was calcu-

lated by using Upholt's (26) formula for p as given by Avise *et al.* (9).

RESULTS

A restriction enzyme survey of the mtDNA present in R. ridibunda and R. lessonae revealed two very different types of mtDNA in R. ridibunda, A and B, and one in R. lessonae, C. mtDNAs of a single individual of each mtDNA type—A. B, and C—were cleaved with each of 19 restriction enzymes with hexanucleotide recognition sites (Table 2). The sizes of the fragments obtained with each enzyme sum to ≈19.5 kilobases. Between the two types of mtDNA in R. ridibunda, A and B, different fragment patterns were found with all enzymes except for Mlu I. which cuts each mtDNA only once (Fig. 1). Equivalent differences in fragment patterns were found between A and C (R. lessonae) mtDNAs (Table 2). Fragment patterns of B mtDNA, however, were surprisingly similar to those of C mtDNA; with the 19 enzymes used, only BamHI and Sma I produced different fragment patterns for the two mtDNAs (Fig. 2).

Similarities in the mtDNAs were calculated for each of the three pairs (Table 3). For the two mtDNA types in R. ridi-

Table 2. Restriction fragment patterns in the mtDNAs of R. ridibunda (types A and B) and R. lessonae (type C)

Enzyme	$n_{\rm a}$	Α	$n_{\rm b}$	В	$n_{\rm c}$	С	$n_{\rm ab}$	$n_{\rm ac}$	$n_{\rm bc}$	Enzyme	$n_{\rm a}$	Α	n_{b}	В	$n_{\rm c}$	С	n_{ab}	$n_{\rm ac}$	$n_{\rm bc}$
Ava I	7	7,000	6	7,000	6	7,000	1	i	6	HindIII	7	5,700	8	5,700	8	5,700	4	4	8
4,000		6,000		6,000						4,500		4,000		4,000					
		3,200		5,100		5,100						4,100		4,000		4,000			
		2,000		1,100		1,100						2,150		2,150		2,150			
		1,800		130		130						1,200		1,500		1,500			
		1,350		105		105						1,100		1,100		1,100			
		100										600		600		600			
BamHI	1	19,500	3	8,000	3	11,000	0	0	1					285		285			
				6,400		8,000				Hpa I	4	6,000	3	10,500	3	10,500	2	2	3
				5,600		470						5,200		6,000		6,000			
Bcl I	3	11,500	4	8,400	4	8,400	1	1	4			5,200		3,250		3,250			
		5,150		7,800		7,800						3,250							
		2,150		2,150		2,150				Kpn I	3	13,500	5	8,800	5	8,800	2	2	5
				900		900				-		5,400		5,400		5,400			
Bgl II	6	10,500	6	5,700	6	5,700	2	2	6			620		3,300		3,300			
•		3,600		3,750		3,750								1,500		1,500			
		2,150		3,600		3,600								620		620			
		1,650		3,000		3,000				Mlu I	1	19,500	1	19,500	1	19,500	1	[,] 1	1
		1,600		1,650		1,650				Pst I	3	7,100	2	12,500	2	12,500	1	1	2
		165		1,500		1,500						6,100		7,100		7,100			
<i>Eco</i> RI	1	19,500	2	15,000	2	15,000	0	0	2			6,100							
				4,400		4,400				Pvu II	4	9,300	5	15,000	5	15,000	0	0	5
<i>Eco</i> RV	2	11,000	2	16,000	2	16,000	0	0	2			5,800		2,250		2,250			
		8,300		3,500		3,500						3,500		1,600		1,600			
Hae II	4	8,800	5	8,500	5	8,500	1	1	5			900		750		750			
		5,400		5,400		5,400								270		270			
		3,800		4,200		4,200				Sal I	1	19,500	0	No cuts	Ø	No cuts	0	0	0
		1,050		625		625				Sma I	3	8,800	2	14,000	1	19,500	0	0	0
				500		500						8,800		5,500					
HinclI	11	5,600	10	5,600	10	5,600	2	2	10			1,800							
		3,200		3,300		3,300				Sst I	2	15,500	1	19,500	1	19,500	0	0	1
		2,900		3,200		3,200						4,200							
		2,350		1,900		1,900				Xba I	3	11,000	1	19,500	1	19,500	0	0	1
		2,100		1,700		1,700						5,900							
		1,200		1,300		1,300						2,300							
		630		1,050		1,050				Xho I	1	19,500	0	No cuts	0	No cuts	0	0	0
		500		830		830													
		375		340		340				Total	67		66		65		17	17	62
		270		110		110													
		195																	

 $n_{\rm ab}$, number of fragments shared by R. ridibunda (A and B) mtDNAs; $n_{\rm ac}$, number of fragments shared by R. ridibunda (A) and R. lessonae (C) mtDNAs; $n_{\rm bc}$, number of fragments shared by R. ridibunda (B) and R. lessonae (C) mtDNAs. $n_{\rm a}$, $n_{\rm b}$, and $n_{\rm c}$ are the number of fragments of types A, B, and C, respectively. The sizes of fragments are given in bases.

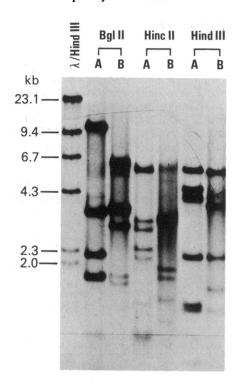


FIG. 1: Autoradiogram of fragments produced by restriction enzyme cleavage of type A and B mtDNAs of R. ridibunda. Digests produced by Bgl II, HincII, and HindIII were end-labeled with ^{32}P and electrophoresed through a 1% agarose slab gel. The size markers [shown in kilobases (kb)] in the leftmost lane were fragments of λ DNA generated by digestion with HindIII.

bunda, A and B, 17 of 133 fragments (25.6%) were shared. This corresponds to a sequence difference of 8.2%. This is similar to the amount of difference, 8.1%, between the A

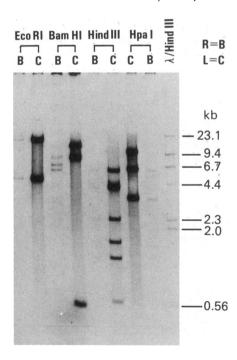


FIG. 2. Autoradiogram of fragments produced by cleavage of *R. ridibunda* type B and *R. lessonae* type C mtDNAs by *EcoRI*, *Bam*-HI, *HindIII*, and *Hpa I*. Only *Bam*HI generates different fragment patterns between B and C mtDNAs. The faint band at 10,500 base pairs generated by *Hpa I* digestion of B mtDNA is clearly visible in the original autoradiogram. kb, Kilobases.

Table 3. Quantitative comparison of fragment patterns

 	-	-	
mtDNA pair	F	δ .	
А-В	0.256	$8.2 \pm 1.0\%$	
A–C	0.258	$8.1 \pm 1.0\%$	
В-С	0.947	$0.3 \pm 0.3\%$	

F, proportion of fragments shared by a pair of mtDNAs; δ , percentage difference in sequence between two mtDNAs.

mtDNA of R. ridibunda and the C mtDNA of R. lessonae. B mtDNA of R. ridibunda, in contrast, had almost 95% of its fragments in common with C mtDNA, resulting in a sequence divergence of only 0.3%.

Given the similarity of B mtDNA of R. ridibunda to the C type of R. lessonae, all R. ridibunda and R. lessonae mtDNA samples were digested with BamHI and Sma I, the only two enzymes that distinguish between all three forms (Table 2). Of the 37 R. ridibunda from Poland, 59% had type A mtDNA, whereas 41% had type B (Table 1). The single R. ridibunda collected in Switzerland (introduced, probably from southeastern Europe) had the B phenotype, although with a variant shorter mitochondrial genome. By using three enzymes, the single R. ridibunda mtDNA sample from Anatolian Turkey was found to have the A phenotype. All 32 R. lessonae from Poland had type C mtDNA.

To confirm the phenotypes indicated by BamHI and Sma I, a number of mtDNA samples were digested with additional enzymes that produced many fragments and many differences between A and C mtDNAs. Including the single preparations of each type cleaved with all 19 enzymes, 50% of type A, 44% of type B, and 30% of type C mtDNAs were cleaved with more than the two diagnostic enzymes: 8 preparations of type A mtDNA, 4 of type B, and 4 of type C were each cleaved with 3-5 enzymes, whereas 2 of type A, 2 of type B, and 4 of type C were each cut with 7-12 enzymes. In sum, the 71 preparations were cleaved a total of 281 times. Within each mtDNA type, no variation in fragment pattern was found with any of the restriction enzymes; significant variation within each type was found, however, in the total lengths of the mitochondrial genomes (unpublished data).

DISCUSSION

Two strikingly different types of mtDNA occur within R. ridibunda. One type, A, apparently the authentic R. ridibunda mitochondrial genome, differs from R. lessonae (C) mtDNA by 8% of its nucleotides. The other form, B, which we call "lessonae-like," differs from R. lessonae mtDNA by only 0.3%. The most plausible explanation for the presence of these two types of mtDNA in R. ridibunda is an interspecific transfer of mtDNA from R. lessonae to R. ridibunda. The presence in Turkish R. ridibunda, far from the present range of R. lessonae, of type A mtDNA is consistent with our identification of this form as that typical of R. ridibunda.

As in the other well-documented case of interspecies transfer of mtDNA, between Mus domesticus and Mus musculus (27), R. ridibunda and R. lessonae form interspecies hybrids. A less convincing case of interspecies transfer of mtDNA has been reported in a pair of hybridizing Drosophila (28). The situation in the frogs is more complicated in that the hybrid forms a series of semi-independent hemiclonal lineages known collectively as R. esculenta, which in Central Europe usually produces gametes containing only the R. ridibunda chromosome set. R. esculenta is maintained by matings with R. lessonae; the occasional matings of R. esculenta with itself produce R. ridibunda progeny.

Transfer of mtDNA from R. lessonae to R. ridibunda probably occurred not directly, but through an intermediate stage involving the hybrid R. esculenta. Transfer through R. esculenta may have occurred in two possible ways. One way

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is by crosses of R. esculenta with R. esculenta: since most R. esculenta lineages in Central Europe have R. lessonae mtDNA (unpublished data), an R. ridibunda produced from an R. esculenta × R. esculenta cross would also probably have R. lessonae mtDNA. In the laboratory, these crosses are rarely successful: most embryos do not reach tadpole stage, and very few tadpoles complete metamorphosis (15, 29). Since the clonally inherited R. ridibunda genome in R. esculenta does not recombine with the R. lessonae genome, it can gradually accumulate deleterious recessive mutations (30) that are masked in effect by the R. lessonae genome (cf. refs. 31 and 32). In R. esculenta × R. esculenta crosses, however, deleterious recessive alleles in the clonal R. ridibunda genome would be unmasked.

A second, and probably more successful, way to transfer R. lessonae mtDNA to R. ridibunda is via a cross between an R. esculenta female and an R. ridibunda male, which would also produce R. ridibunda progeny with R. lessonae mtDNA.

Although our sampling of R. ridibunda and R. lessonae was geographically limited, these samples provide no evidence for ongoing introgression of R. lessonae mitochondrial genomes into R. ridibunda. Almost half of the R. ridibunda in Central Europe have a lessonae-like (B) mitochondrial genome, but none has been found with the R. lessonae (C) mtDNA that is present in both R. esculenta (unpublished data) and R. lessonae; conversely, the B mtDNA has not been found in either R. esculenta or R. lessonae. This suggests that the introgression of lessonae-like mtDNA into R. ridibunda occurred either at some time in the past or at some locality other than central Poland. If the introgression occurred at some other locality, it nevertheless happened long enough ago to allow spread of the introgressed mitochondrial genome into central Poland, where we found no R. ridibunda with C mtDNA.

Evidence in this study complements evidence, for this species pair, of introgression of nuclear genes as determined by electrophoretic markers (33, 34). It has seemed possible that the presence in Central European R. ridibunda of lessonae-like nuclear alleles might reflect inheritance of these alleles from a common ancestor, even though the immunologically estimated divergence date makes this seem unlikely (35). The presence in some R. ridibunda of a R. lessonae mitochondrial genome appears to confirm that introgression rather than common inheritance is the source of lessonae-like nuclear alleles in R. ridibunda.

The introgression of R. lessonae mtDNA into an R. ridibunda nuclear background points up clearly the disjunction in inheritance of nuclear and mitochondrial genes. A similar discordancy between mitochondrial genomes and morphological traits was found in Peromyscus by Lansman et al. (36), although they suggested that the morphology was not a valid indicator of phylogeny in this case. Phylogenies based on single genes, or even groups of genes, reflect only the particular history of that gene or those genes and not necessarily the history of the whole organism. An example in which possibly up to a third of the nuclear genes would indicate a phylogeny different from that based on the remaining two-thirds has been reported recently in another group of western Palearctic water frogs (37).

Studies of the inheritance of mtDNA provide important and otherwise inaccessible information about the evolutionary histories of closely related species. The problem of determining phylogenetic relationships is complex; an adequate understanding requires combining data from a broad spectrum of traits at various levels, from morphological to molecular.

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